

THE CREED



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also I am known.” And our Lord said (Matt. 13:43), “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.”

Amen.



The Historical Setting of the Creed

*Councils Before the First Ecumenical Council,
and Creeds Before the Nicene Creed*

by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery

On the feast of the Nativity of Christ we chant the famous hymn by the nun Cassianē:

When Augustus reigned alone upon earth, the many kingdoms of men came to an end. And when Thou wast made man of the Pure One, the many gods of idolatry were destroyed. The cities of the world passed under one single rule; and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Godhead. The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar; and we, the faithful, were enrolled in the Name of the Godhead, when Thou, our God, wast made man. Great is Thy mercy: Glory be to Thee.

In the first century and a half after the birth of Christ we may trace in the Roman empire the formation of a new society and a new nationality as a result of the disappearance of distinctions in language and manners. Distinctions of race and national jealousies gave way to a cosmopolitan society. But after this century and a half we may also trace the decay of this national sentiment, the rise of expenses, the deterioration of material resources, and the increasing surrender of local control to a centralized administration that proved unequal to the responsibilities laid upon it. The death of Marcus Aurelius in the year 180 and of his son Commodus in 192 were followed by a century of war and disorder, of the stern rule of soldier emperors struggling to preserve the empire. Not only the frontier

territories, but Italy itself experienced the ravages of war, famine, and plague.

The Roman emperors had often found it necessary to travel from Rome, and had established palaces and centers of government in Nicomedia and Nicaea for the better administration of the eastern provinces. In the year 287, Diocletian divided the empire into a western and an eastern half, each half of which was to be ruled by an Augustus. This division was the natural outcome of the history of the previous century, and had as its object the increased stability of the imperial authority and the more efficient organization of the administration. Diocletian associated Maximian with himself as his fellow Augustus, and six years later, in 293, each Augustus was associated with a Caesar, these being Galerius and Constantius, thus further dividing the responsibilities of government in a way that, it was hoped, would not sacrifice the unity of empire. The future emperor Constantine was born the year after the division of the empire between the two Augusti, in the year 288, and grew up at the courts of Diocletian and Galerius.

A brief account of Constantine's rise to power will illustrate the turbulence of the period. In the year 305, Diocletian and Maximian abdicated and entered into retirement. Constantius and Galerius were raised to the rank of Augusti, and Severus and Maximinus Daia were made Caesars. On this occasion Constantius requested that his son join him, and Constantine, then only seventeen, fled the court via the imperial post horses to join his father. Constantius died soon after, in York, Britain, upon which the troops proclaimed Constantine as Augustus, but Constantine, exhibiting the prudence that was to distinguish many other of his actions, sent a letter to Galerius, requesting his recognition as a Caesar, a position that might naturally be his on the elevation of Severus to the rank of Augustus.

Many in Rome were dissatisfied with the arrangements that Diocletian had instituted, and on the twenty-eighth of October, in the year 306, the Romans elected Maxentius, the son of Maximian,

the infants will be brought up and trained in the Orthodox Faith. In the Liturgy in the Litany for Catechumens, we pray for the spiritual training and prospering of these children, as well as for the adults converted to the Orthodox Faith and preparing for Baptism.

Baptism is followed immediately by the Mystery of Chrismation, anointing with Chrism (Myron) accompanied by the formula, "The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit." This Mystery conveys the Gift of the Holy Spirit for growth and strength in spiritual life. Anglicans (Episcopalians) and other Protestants claim that what they call "Confirmation" is the same as our Mystery of Chrismation, but they are ready and willing to "confirm" submissive Orthodox people. Orthodox persons who receive "confirmation" from them, or permit their children to receive it, are guilty of rejecting the Gift of the Holy Spirit with which they were sealed at their Orthodox Chrismation.

ARTICLE II. The Eleventh Article declares that there is to be "the resurrection of the dead." There is no immortality of the soul apart from the body. The Apostle (1 Cor. 15:35-58) explains the relation of the earthly body in the life after death. The body is a seed which is sown. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

ARTICLE I2. The Creed concludes with the declaration that there is to be "the life of the age to come." After accomplishing the purpose for which this world was created, God will bring the history of this world to an end, and a new world will begin. Even those who love God and work for Him catch only faint glimpses of the glory that is to be, for that other life as compared to this is as far beyond our imagining as the Fatherly love of God is beyond anything that our experience with earthly fatherhood can help us to imagine. The Apostle (1 Cor. 13:12) says, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as

because the Church lives under His Dispensation, and draws from Him Her life and powers. The greater number of the members of the Church have already gone from this world, and are no longer visible to us; but this Article affirms that in this world the Church is a single visible establishment, concerning the Unity of which the Lord said (John 17:9, 20–23): “I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me . . . and also for them which shall believe in Me through their word: That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us . . . that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me.” This Unity is irreconcilably different from the Protestant conception of union through the invention of formulas broad enough to cover mutually contradictory doctrines. The Unity of the One Church is not the product of such arrangements to make the word “Christ” as empty of meaning as the word “heresy” has come to be among Protestants, but is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit fulfilling as Giver of Life our Lord’s own promise.

ARTICLE 10. The Tenth Article declares belief in One Baptism for the remission of sins. Baptism is a Sacrament, a Mystery of the Church — that is, a holy act through which the saving power of God works upon a believer. The person baptized dies to the life of sin, and is born again of the Holy Spirit. The Lord said, “Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. . . . Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:3, 5, 6); and, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Saint Peter (Acts 2:38) said to his hearers on Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins.” The Apostle Paul says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” One Baptism, because birth, whether physical or spiritual, can happen only once. For Christians, Baptism takes the place of Circumcision (see Col. 2:11, 12) which infants eight days old received in the time of the Old Testament. Accordingly, infants are baptized, presented by Sponsors whose duty it is to ensure that

to the rank of Caesar. Maxentius then induced his father to end his retirement, and in the year 307, Maxentius and his father Maximian defeated and captured Severus, upon which they proclaimed Constantine Augustus of the West. Galerius marched on Rome, but was compelled to retreat at its gates. In that same year, Maximian sought to defeat his own son Maxentius, but was himself defeated and sought refuge with Constantine. In the year 308, Diocletian and Galerius appointed Licinius as Augustus of the West, Constantine and Maximinus Daia being recognized as consuls. These appointments were ignored by Constantine, who continued to bear the title of Augustus in the West.

In the year 310, Maximian endeavored to assume the purple at Arles, but was captured by Constantine and later put to death. Maximinus Daia then entered into negotiations with Maxentius, which caused Licinius to enter into league with Constantine. In the spring of 312, Constantine defeated Maxentius’ generals at Turin and Verona and marched on Rome. This was a bold and desperate move on Constantine’s part, for Maxentius’ forces were considerably greater than his own, and had the superiority of the control of the city of Rome. Constantine considered his need for divine assistance, and recognized that his father, a tolerant monotheist, had prospered more than others who had been fervent adherents of the pagan gods. It was at this time that, at noon, he saw in the heavens the letters “X” and “P,” the first two letters of the Name of Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ), imposed to form a Cross, and the inscription around it, “By this conquer.” That night Christ appeared to him and confirmed the earlier revelation, that by the sign of the Cross he would be victorious. The following day, Constantine had this sign placed upon the armor of his soldiers and carried before them into battle.

That day, the twenty-eighth of October, was the sixth anniversary of Maxentius’ accession to the rank of Caesar. Considering this an auspicious day for him, Maxentius had asked a board of senators to consult the Sybilline Oracles. There they found a prophecy that on the twenty-eighth of October, the enemy of the Romans would

perish. Maxentius, trusting in this oracle and in the greater number of his forces, left the security of the city and engaged Constantine beyond the Milvian Bridge. Here Constantine's forces attacked those of Maxentius on two fronts and soon defeated them. In their haste to retreat, thousands of Maxentius' forces were drowned in the Tiber, Maxentius himself perishing when the bridge of boats he had built over the river gave way under the press of the retreating army.

Upon entering Rome in triumph, Constantine was proclaimed senior Augustus by the Roman senate. One of his first acts was to write letters to the governors of the provinces, ordering the restoration of all properties that had formerly belonged to the churches. He also wrote that the clergy were to be exempt from civic obligations, noting that when they are thus free to perform their religious services, the state prospers in all things.

In February of 313, Constantine and Licinius met at Milan and there agreed upon a policy of toleration and restitution that was to be proclaimed by each Augustus, resulting in peace for the Christians throughout the empire. But while this policy was maintained by Constantine in the West, in the East there was instead an increase in the persecution of Christians. In the following nine years, Constantine's solicitude for the Church and wise government contrasted increasingly with Licinius' persecution of the Christians and his indolence and cruelty. In the year 324, Constantine twice defeated Licinius' superior forces, and Licinius, at first spared, was put to death in the year 325.

Constantine was now sole emperor of both East and West, a position he maintained for the rest of his life. It was in the same year, 325, that the First Ecumenical Council was summoned, that the divisions disturbing the Church might be healed, the Church then presenting a unified force for the conversion of the newly pacified empire.

Christ the Lord and Only-begotten Son from two natures, without the distinction of natures being taken away by the union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and hypostasis, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Only-begotten Son, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us. These things, therefore, having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention, the holy Ecumenical Council hath decreed that no one shall be suffered to bring forward, to write, to compose, to believe a different faith, nor to teach it to others. But such as dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed to such as wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth from the Gentiles, or the Jews, or any heresy whatsoever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics: let them be anathematized.

ARTICLE 8. In the Eighth Article we declare that we believe in the Holy Spirit exactly as we believe in God the Father and God the Son. By calling Him the Lord, we call Him God: the Greek word for "Lord" here, as always, is the same one used to translate the Old Testament name "Yahweh." He is the "Giver of life," not only giving but also sustaining life and order. He imparts spiritual life, and at need renews and strengthens it. He proceeds from the Father: as the relation of the Son to the Father is described as Generation, so the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father is described as Procession. The clause "Who spake by the Prophets" unites the Old Testament with the New Dispensation, teaching that the same Holy Spirit Who spoke in the past now also speaks through the Church.

ARTICLE 9. The clause "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" comes next after the Article on the Holy Spirit

the Passion and Resurrection is actual history and not a myth or allegory of the kind familiar to the heathen of that day. His Burial is mentioned because of its importance in leading to the Resurrection. He rose again on the third day. Saint Athanasius says He did not rise on the first day, lest the reality of His Death should be denied; nor on the second day, lest His Incorruption should not be clearly manifested; nor later than the third day, lest the identification of His Body should be questioned, and the events fade from memory. At His Ascension, His Humanity having been glorified, He reassumed all that He had laid aside in His Incarnation. His Session at the Father's Right Hand teaches that the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, in His Two Natures, Human and Divine, assumed by His Ascension that Divine power and glory which had ever been His in His Divine Nature. He is coming again, but in glory, to judge the living and the dead; and His Kingdom shall never end.

However, heretical ingenuity sought cover under the very clauses of the Nicene Creed, and developed further inventions. The Church therefore was brought together to state the doctrine about Christ in still greater detail in the Formula (or Definition) of Chalcedon, at the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which convened in Chalcedon in 451. After affirming the Nicene Creed ("The Symbol of the One Hundred and Fifty"), the Formula declares:

Following, therefore, the holy Fathers, we all teach with one voice that the Son [of God], our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be confessed as being Himself the one Son, being Himself perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, made of a reasonable soul and body, consubstantial with the Father according to His Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to His manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of His Father before the ages according to His Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation the Same was born of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos according to His manhood; He is unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, and inseparably known to be the one and same

Councils Before the First Ecumenical Council

The concept of a Church council was not a new one. The first council may be said to be that recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, which dealt with an important question: to what extent were converts to Christianity to adopt the inheritance of the Law of Moses? The conversion of the Gentiles had been by Divine revelation when the Apostle Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to baptize Cornelius and his household. Were such converts to live in complete ignorance of the rich inheritance of the Old Covenant? Were they to be expected to adopt every precept of the Mosaic Law? These were important questions, and one can well imagine that there were vigorous adherents on each side, seeing that the Apostles Peter and Paul themselves were once at variance over this question. Remembering the words of Christ, that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, the Apostles gathered and arrived at their judgment, prefacing it with the words, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . ." then setting forth those precepts of the Law that were to be kept by all.

In the second half of the second century, the churches of Asia Minor were confronted with the rise of Montanism. From this time it became increasingly common to have councils of bishops meeting at regular intervals to consider and decide on matters of grave importance affecting all the churches.

In the edicts of Constantine one may discern certain recurring themes: those who had persecuted the Christians had all perished, while those who had protected them had been favored by God. He, especially, had been blessed by God, and now felt the protection of Christians and provision for the Church to be his foremost responsibilities.

But just when he had proclaimed toleration for the Christians and was endeavoring to provide for the Church in every way, it was especially grievous to him to find the Christians at odds with one

another. He first experienced this with the Donatists in Africa.

The Donatists were a powerful sect in North Africa and were similar in many ways to the earlier Novatians. They believed that the validity of sacerdotal acts depended upon the personal character of the celebrant. Given this mentality, they would not receive any who had given up copies of the Scriptures under compulsion during the persecutions of Diocletian unless that person had been rebaptized if a layman, or reconsecrated if a bishop. These tensions came to a head when Mensurius, the Bishop of Carthage, died in 311. Mensurius had rejected the Donatist mentality. Those of like mind with him elected his archdeacon Caecilian, who was consecrated Bishop of Carthage by Felix, Bishop of Aptunga. The Donatists rejected this consecration, claiming that Felix had given up copies of the Scriptures during the persecution, and consecrated their own bishop. The Emperor Constantine was aware of these disputes, for, when he sent edicts and funds to Carthage, it was always to Caecilian and those bishops with him.

In 313 the Donatists appealed to Constantine, asking him to appoint three bishops from Gaul to judge their case. The emperor, instead, ordered that a council of bishops should assemble at Rome to consider the matter. Acceding to the requests of the Donatists, he named three bishops from Gaul to attend this council. To these Miltiades, the Bishop of Rome, added fifteen bishops from various sees in Italy. This council rendered a decision in favor of Caecilian. The Donatists rejected this decision, alleging prejudice, and again appealed to the emperor. The emperor then ordered a council of bishops of the Western provinces to meet at Arles in 314, their transportation and lodging to be provided for by the public treasury. At this council Constantine was present in person. This council, consisting of thirty-three bishops, reaffirmed the decision of the earlier council and made other decisions about the faith. The further history of Constantine's dealings with the Donatists need not concern us here.

Son, His Word. Man was created in God's image and likeness. The Apostle describes this image as a creation "in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24).

ARTICLES 2-7. In the Second Article we declare that we believe in One Lord Jesus Christ exactly as we believe in God the Father. We confess Him to be Son of God by Generation from the Father, and Generation implies possession of the same Divine Essence. The Son of God is not created, but generated ("begotten"); the Arians, on the other hand, taught that He was created. He is "the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, True God of True God; begotten, not made." Because He is begotten and not made, He is "of one essence with the Father." The phrase "Light of Light" is figurative, appealing to our own experience that light and its source are simultaneous. The idea comes from Hebrews 1:3: "God has spoken to us by His Son . . . through Whom also He created the ages. And He, the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of God's Hypostasis, sustains the universe by the word of His power." The language passes from figure to direct statement in the phrase, "True God of True God." Through Him all created things came into existence. Creation is the expression, under finite conditions, of God's thought through His Word (see the beginning of Saint John's Gospel). For us human beings, and for our salvation, "He came down from the Heavens, and was incarnate (enfleshed) of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man." The reference to His descent corresponds to the later mention of His Ascension. By His descent He voluntarily submitted in His Incarnation to laying aside all the outward manifestations of Divine Glory, and placed Himself under the conditions and limitations which belong to human nature even in its perfection before the Fall. He took on Himself a nature the same as our own in capacity for suffering, but He was sinless. His Body was a real Body taken from His Mother's body, and she bore Him without losing her virginity. He suffered, and was buried. The fact of His Crucifixion is connected with human annals by mention of Pontius Pilate, for the purpose of affirming that the Narrative of

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH

The Creed of Nicaea and Constantinople

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; being of one essence with the Father; by Whom all things were made;

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from the Heavens, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man;

And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried;

And arose again on the third day according to the Scriptures;

And ascended into the Heavens, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;

And shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life; Who proceedeth from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the prophets.

In One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead,

And the life of the age to come. Amen.

In the year 324, Constantine defeated Licinius and emerged as the only sovereign of a united empire. But in the East he again found the Christians divided, this time over the doctrines of Arius. His first attempt at healing these differences was to address letters to each side and to send Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba, to Alexandria. But these measures proved ineffectual. At these meetings it was decided to hold a council of bishops at Ancyra, where Marcellus, an opponent of Arius, was bishop. It was the Emperor Constantine who ordered that this council should, instead, meet at Nicaea. This council was similar in many ways to the earlier council of Arles: the transport and lodging of the bishops was provided for by the emperor, who was himself present at the deliberations. But in that the bishops of the entire Roman Empire were summoned to be present, this council was the first to which the term ecumenical may be truly applied, for it was summoned by the emperor, ecumenical in its representation, and in the authority of its decisions.

Creeds Before the Nicene Creed

Having traced the rise to power of the Emperor Constantine and the precedents for the Council which he summoned, we must now consider a third and final point, that of the precedents for the Creed by which the Council of Nicaea was to forever distinguish itself.

As all councils may be traced to the council of the Apostles set forth in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, so it may be said that all creeds derive from the Commission of Christ to His Apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). All creeds may be said to set forth the doctrine of the Trinity. All creeds derive from the teaching of the Apostles, and especially of their teaching in conjunction with baptism.

The first nucleus of the creed may be seen in the affirmations that take place at baptism:

“Dost thou renounce Satan . . . ?”

“I do.” . . .

“Dost thou unite thyself unto Christ?”

“I do.” . . .

“Dost thou believe in Him?”

“I believe in Him as King and as God.” . . .

“Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?”

“I have.”

“Bow down also before Him.”

“I bow down before the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in Essence and undivided.”

Unfortunately, this earliest history of the creed is only surmise, for the first Christians did not commit these Symbols of Faith to writing. Saint Cyprian admonished his flock that the Symbol of Faith was not to be profaned, and the words of Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna, though written many years later, expressed this mentality:

Let the mind hold and the memory guard this pledge of hope, this decree of salvation, this symbol of life, this safeguard of faith, lest vile paper depreciate the precious gift of the Divinity, lest black ink obscure the mystery of light, lest an unworthy and profane hearer hold the secret of God.

Many have studied the works of the Apostolic Fathers to find in them traces of early creeds, and although one will not find instances of creeds as such, many passages reminiscent of the creeds are worth a detailed consideration. One example will suffice, this from Saint Ignatius' *Epistle to the Trallians*, in which he refutes those who believed that the Incarnation of Christ had been but a semblance:

Be deaf, then, when any would speak to you apart from Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was descended from David and born from Mary: who truly was born both of God and of the Virgin . . . truly took a body . . . truly ate and drank, was crucified and died in the time of Pontius Pilate, yea truly, and not

The priest: Dost thou believe in Him?

The candidate: I believe in Him as King and as God. (*And he reciteth the Nicene Creed.*)

The priest (thrice): Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?

The candidate (each time): I have.

The priest: Then bow down before Him.

The candidate: I bow down before the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: the Trinity, One in Essence and Undivided.

As a summary statement of Christian belief, the Nicene Creed teaches in positive language the Unity of God in Three Persons, the Deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and the truth that complete and permanent humanity was united to the complete and permanent Deity of the One Christ. One-sided and exaggerated insistence on one or another of these points, to the extent that the other points were distorted or denied, produced the false doctrines called heresies. The immediate occasion for the composition of the Nicene Creed was the Arian heresy, which attacked the consubstantial Deity and Perfect Manhood of our Lord. The purpose of the Creed was to express the real sense of Scripture and the true faith of the Church in language which could not be misunderstood, and which could not be accepted by any Arian.

Summary of the Articles

ARTICLE I. There is a difference in “to believe” and “to believe in.” We “believe” Saint Paul, but we do not “believe in” him in the sense that he is God by nature. The English word “Almighty” stands for a Greek word which means “All-sovereign.” Reference to God the Father anticipates reference to God the Son and to God the Holy Spirit. God is One, in three Persons (Hypostases). God the Father is neither begotten nor proceeds from another Person; God the Son is from all eternity begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit from all eternity proceeds from the Father. The Three Hypostases are of absolutely equal Divine majesty. God the Father is Creator through God the

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teach them to keep all the commands I have laid on you.”

From the earliest times, converts were required to say, “I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.” This simple profession of faith was expanded by local churches as need arose to protect the tradition of Apostolic teachings from infiltration by error and misunderstanding.

On the basis of these local Baptismal Formulas the Nicene Creed was constructed. It added nothing new to Apostolic teaching and belief. The only new thing about the Creed was that it presented for the first time one definite standard of belief as accepted by the entire Church.

After Nicaea, the local Baptismal Formulas continued in use. In some cases the local Formulas took the Creed as a basis for expansion to meet the dangers of particular heresies; in other cases, the local Formulas were enriched by Nicene phrases. Finally, the single Service now in use among us for administering Baptism prevailed over all local usages. In that part of it which is called “The Making of a Catechumen,” a Baptismal Formula, into which the Creed was fitted, survives.

The priest and the candidate for baptism face toward the West. The priest (thrice): Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his angels, and all his service, and all his pomp?

The candidate (each time): I do.

The priest (thrice): Hast thou renounced Satan?

The candidate (each time): I have.

The priest: Blow and spit upon him.

Then the priest and the candidate turn to face toward the East.

The priest (thrice): Dost thou unite thyself unto Christ?

The candidate (each time): I do.

The priest (thrice): Hast thou united thyself unto Christ?

The candidate (each time): I have.

in seeming, was crucified and died; . . . and rose after three days, His Father raising Him up, and after having spent forty days with the Apostles was received up to the Father, and sits at His right hand waiting till His enemies be put under His feet.

We may surmise that the first creeds were brief, and that as erroneous opinions arose as to the nature of the Godhead, articles were added to these confessions that would exclude and refute these errors.

The earliest passage which we may identify as a creed proper is preserved in Saint Irenaeus’ work Against Heresies. Saint Irenaeus writes that he had known Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John. Saint Irenaeus had come from Asia Minor to Gaul. His writings, therefore, link us to the Apostles, and East with West. His words are:

For the Church, though scattered through the whole world even to the ends of the earth, yet having received from the Apostles and their disciples the faith in One God the Father Almighty Who made heaven and earth and the seas and all that is in them, and in one Christ Jesus the Son of God Who was made flesh for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit who preached through the Prophets the dispensations [of God] and the advents [of Jesus Christ], and His birth of a Virgin, and His suffering and His rising from the dead, and the ascension in the flesh of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven and His coming from Heaven in the glory of the Father, for the consummation of all things and to raise up all flesh of the whole human race, that according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth may bow to Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Saviour and King, and every tongue may confess to Him, and He may execute just judgment on all; the spiritual powers of wickedness, and the angels who have transgressed, and become apostate, and the impious and unjust, and lawless and blasphemers among men, He may adjudge into eternal fire; but, bestowing life on the just and holy who have both kept His

commandments and continued in His love, some from the first and some after repentance, He may give them immortality and make them partakers of eternal glory. Having received this proclamation and this faith, as we before said, the Church though scattered through all the world carefully keeps it as though dwelling in one house, and believes in like manner as though she had but one heart and soul, and in accord therewith she preaches and teaches and delivers as though she had but one mouth. For the languages of the world are dissimilar, but the effect of the tradition is one and the same. And in no other wise have either the Churches established in Germany believed and delivered, nor those in Spain, nor among the Celts, nor in the East, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor those established in the middle of the world. But as the sun, God's creature, is one and the same in all the world, so too the preaching of the truth shines everywhere and enlightens all men who wish to come to the knowledge of the truth. And neither will he who is very powerful in language among those who preside over the Churches say other than this (for the disciple is not above his master) nor will he who is weak in the word impair the tradition. For as the Faith is one and the same, neither he who is very able to speak on it adds thereto, nor does he who is less powerful diminish therefrom.

We may glean other phrases of a like nature from the writings of Saint Irenaeus, after which we will see that, apart from the phrase inserted to refute the errors of Arius and Macedonius, the creed set forth at the First Ecumenical Council, that is, at the beginning of the fourth century, is little different from that set forth at the end of the second.

There are a number of other creeds of this period preceding the First Ecumenical Council, creeds worthy of close study. Let us consider but two more, after which we may make a few summary conclusions.

church-unity, a model accessible to sight and contemplation through many centuries.

The unity of the Orthodox Church depends on three things: uniformity of doctrine, uniformity of canon law, and uniformity of ritual. There is no need of a central monarchical government, and none exists. Therefore, Episcopalians and all others who want unity with the Orthodox can have it just as we have it, and on equal terms with us. But they must enter this Orthodox unity one person at a time, as everybody has always had to do, as you and I did. Here, already in operation, tested by long centuries of experience, is the only program for Church unity which can possibly agree with the meaning of the Ninth Article of the Creed that church-unity is attainable only inside, and never outside, the one true Church.

III

Summary of the Creed

The purpose of these Lectures was to explain the Creed in terms of its use as an instrument for maintaining the True Faith among ourselves and for teaching it to other people in our own communities. The Creed is not merely to be known, but also to be used. In order to use it we must consider its bearings on the conditions of modern life.

Accordingly, in Part 1 we dealt with the question, "Why have a Creed?" In Part 2 we dealt directly with the application of the Creed to contemporary conditions. Inasmuch as such a study of all the Articles was impossible within the limits of the allotted time, we discussed the application of Article Nine by way of example, because of its obviously close connection with the local experience and need.

Parts 1 and 2 seemed to be necessary preparation for the brief summary of the entire Creed in Part 3 — a summary of contents, without extended reference to contemporary application. This summary is what follows:

At the end of Saint Matthew's Gospel we read the Lord's command: "Go: make disciples of all the nations: baptize them in the

alone is the one True Church of the Creed. She teaches that outside of the Orthodox Church the Orthodox cannot possibly find valid ministry, cannot possibly find true and genuine Sacraments. It is perfectly obvious to everybody, including the Episcopalians, that Episcopalians are *outside* the Orthodox Church, not *inside*. Therefore, any Orthodox person who accepts any ministrations from the Episcopalians or Anglicans is in exactly the same position as though he had had recourse to Methodists, or Baptists, or any other equally Protestant source.

The “Reunion of the Churches”

All of our troubles in this connection, of course, involve also the questions raised by the intense propaganda for what people call the “reunion of the churches.” Many Orthodox people have been infected by this propaganda. Indeed, so widely and so deeply has this propaganda taken hold among us that we behold the remarkable spectacle of Orthodoxy shattered into impotent disunity by unity propaganda.

But the Protestantizing Orthodox, though numerous, cannot have their own way. There are still some Orthodox people left who are Orthodox, and who refuse to abandon or compromise Orthodox principles. Because of their insistence on absolute loyalty to the Orthodox Faith, they constitute an unconquerable remnant which loathes and rejects the Protestantizing of the Orthodox Church. They know and understand the Protestant unity program for what it is, a project based on principles which flatly and irreconcilably contradict the fundamental Orthodox doctrine of the one true Church.

Orthodox people who are befooled by this Protestant unity propaganda overlook the fact that the unity problem was solved long ago by the Orthodox Church Herself through principles of unity which rest on unshakeable Orthodox doctrinal foundations. Our Orthodox Church is the great and perfect model of organizational

In his work *On Baptism*, Tertullian gives a creed which he states “has come down from the commencement of the Gospel.” It is as follows:

The Rule of faith is that whereby we believe that there is really one God and no other but the Creator of the world Who produced all out of nothing by His Word sent forth first of all things. That Word is called His Son, who appeared in various ways to the patriarchs under the Name of God and was always heard in the Prophets, and at last descended, through the Spirit and Power of God the Father, into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb and born of her, lived as Jesus Christ, then preached a new law and new promise of the Kingdom of Heaven, wrought miracles, was fastened to the Cross, rose again the third day, was taken into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. He sent in His place the power of the Holy Spirit to influence believers, and will come with glory to take His holy ones into the enjoyment of life eternal and the promises of Heaven, and to judge the wicked to eternal fire, after a revival of both body and soul with the restoration of the flesh.

The last which we will quote is that given in the *Life* of Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea, written by Saint Gregory of Nyssa.¹ In this *Life* it is recorded that:

At that time there began to spread the heresy of Sabellius and Paul of Samosata. Saint Gregory was in perplexity regarding it and prayed ardently to God and to the Mother of God to reveal to him the true faith. One night while he was praying for this especially ardently, the Most Pure Virgin Mary appeared to him, radiant as the sun, with John the Theologian, who was clothed in a bishop’s vestments. Pointing to Gregory with her hand, the Most Pure One ordered John the Theologian to teach him how the mystery of the Holy Trinity ought to be believed.

¹Included in the Migne *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 46, col. 912-3.

By the command of the Mother of God, in a short period of time Saint Gregory was instructed by Saint John the Theologian in the great mysteries of God and drew from the inexhaustible depth of the wisdom of Divine knowledge.

The words of the revelation spoken by John the Theologian were the following:

“There is one God, the Father of the Living Word, His subsistent Wisdom and Power and Eternal Image: the perfect Begetter of Him Who is Perfect, the Father of the Only-begotten Son. There is One Lord, the Only of the Only, God of God, Imprint and Image of Divinity,² the effectual Word, the Wisdom that embraceth the constitution of all things, and the Power that hath made the whole creation, the True Son of the True Father, Invisible of Invisible, Incorruptible of Incorruptible, Immortal of Immortal, and the Ever-Eternal of the Ever-Eternal. And there is One Holy Spirit, having His existence from the Father and being manifest to men through the Son, Perfect Image of the Perfect Son, Life, the Cause of everything living, Holy Fount, Holiness supplying holines, in Whom is manifested God the Father, Who is over all and in all, and God the Son, Who is through all. A perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, never sundered or separated.”

This is the creed as given by Saint Gregory of Nyssa. There are texts of the *Life* that include the following as part of the creed, though some consider this a gloss added by Saint Gregory of Nyssa:

Wherefore there is nothing either created or servile in the Trinity, nor anything adventitious, as if previously non-existent and subsequently introduced. Therefore, neither was the Son ever lacking to the Father, nor the Holy Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abideth forever.

² χαρακτήρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος.

Inasmuch as there is and can be only one Church, there are no sacraments outside of the one Church, nor any valid ministers, nor indeed any people entitled to receive Sacraments.

The Orthodox doctrine about the powers of ordained persons agrees with the teaching of the Apostle who says (1 Cor. 4:1), “You are to look on us as servants of Christ, and as stewards of the mysteries of God.” *Stewards*, he says, not owners and proprietors. The Church Herself is the Treasury of Grace, and Her ministers dispense to the faithful that Treasure, which is not their own, but of which they are but stewards. Her ministers are set apart by the Mystery of Holy Orders, which is dispensed from that same Treasury. They are set apart because their duties are high and holy, their responsibilities such as are not lightly either to be entrusted or to be assumed, for their duties and responsibilities pertain to the protection, safety, and nurture of Christ’s flock. But these ministers have no personal powers; they have only the powers of their office. Only a Bishop can ordain, but when he ordains, he does not draw on any personal power, but on the Treasury of the one Church.

According to Orthodox doctrine, the claim of any Orthodox Authority to the obedience of its subjects ceases completely to have any force at the very moment when that Orthodox Authority clearly and grossly violates the standards of Orthodox Catholic teaching.

But the Episcopalians claim that the line of Bishops from the Apostles to those now called bishops among them is unbroken.

As we have explained already, even if the Episcopalian claim to an unbroken succession of bishops from the Apostles to those now called bishops among them were true, the claim would still be meaningless as far as Orthodox doctrine is concerned. According to Orthodox doctrine, an unbroken Apostolic Succession of Bishops, taken alone, is in itself and by itself no recommendation at all: it is a fraud, because it does not even pretend to guarantee purity of doctrine, and of all necessities purity of doctrine is the very first one.

To sum the matter up, the Orthodox Church teaches that She

receives a special and particular power which has been handed down in an unbroken line from one of the original Apostles. According to the Latin theologians, whom the Episcopalians follow in this matter, this special gift is not itself a divine grace, nor is it the authority of an office in the Church, but it is an imprinted character which is indelible, and therefore can never be lost.

Please notice that we are not concerned with the doctrine of the indelibility of Holy Orders, but only with the particular use of that doctrine by Episcopalians.

A Priest, according to them, is for ever a Priest, and a Bishop cannot lose his power to transmit his gift to whomever he may choose. Notice that, according to this doctrine of theirs, the Bishop's gift or power indelibly stamped upon him cannot be taken away from him even if he falls into schism, or heresy, or even into total unbelief; it cannot be taken away from him or be hindered even by excommunication. According to their doctrine, it is even possible for one who has received the gift at consecration to the episcopate to found an entirely new church on any doctrines which please him, and in that strange new church, Priesthood and Sacraments would have full validity, power, and effect.

The Orthodox doctrine of Apostolic Succession is very different, and offers no support for such impieties and absurdities. According to Orthodox doctrine, Apostolic Succession pertains to the transmission of the True Faith undiminished and unalloyed from the time of the Apostles to the end of the world. An unbroken line of succession for Bishops naturally accompanies the unbroken line of succession in the transmission of the True Faith unimpaired by novelties or losses across the centuries. Bishops are authenticated by the Faith, not the other way round. Where the True Faith is, there is the True Church.

The notion that a Bishop could ordain, or a Priest perform his ministry, when in schism, or in heresy, or otherwise cut off from the Church, is not only absurd, but is also a denial of the Creed.

After this vision Saint Gregory recorded with his own hand the words spoken to him by Saint John the Theologian, and this record was preserved in the Church of Neocaesarea for the course of many years. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, having related the miraculous origin of this Symbol of Faith, adds, "If anyone wishes to be assured of this, let him hear the church in which he preached and in which up to now the original version is preserved, written by the blessed hand." The blessed Macrina, the grandmother of Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory of Nyssa, had heard Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, and it was she who brought his Symbol of Faith to Cappadocia and taught it to her grandchildren.

We may now make a few summary conclusions.

The First Ecumenical Council was occasioned by the uniting of the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire under one rule, and of the Emperor Constantine's concern that, union in the empire having been achieved, union in the Church was now of the greatest importance.

There were many councils before the First Ecumenical Council, even councils summoned by the Emperor Constantine, but the First Ecumenical Council transcended all that had gone before it in scope, in the number of bishops assembled, and in the gravity of the pronouncements enacted at the council. The First Ecumenical Council became the precedent for all others, and its faith was affirmed at every subsequent council.

Likewise there were many creeds before that of the Nicene Creed, and if we rank all that went before it and consider them phrase by phrase, we shall find only one phrase that is unique to the Nicene Creed, namely, that added in refutation of Arius, "ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ," "being of one essence with the Father." Not that the First Ecumenical Council drew upon these earlier documents as such, but that all were pronouncements of the one common and apostolic Faith.

After the Council of Nicaea there were as yet many controver-

sies before the Nicene Creed emerged as the definition of the Faith accepted by all. Today it is the Creed of Nicaea and Constantinople is that recited at every Orthodox service, at every Baptism, at every Divine Liturgy.

times of discouragement when we think we foresee the early reduction of Orthodoxy to a pitifully small remnant, or even its probable extinction in most parts of the earth, its sure extinction in America. Yet our great Apostle has words to revive our fainting hopes. He brings up the case of the Prophet Elias (Rom. 11:2-4). "Surely you know," says Saint Paul, "what the Scripture says of Elias? how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Thy Prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I alone am left, and they seek my life.' But what says the answer of God to him? 'I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.'"

The point of this digression is that every Orthodox Christian is personally responsible for preserving the purity of Orthodox doctrine; that he must prepare for that responsibility by equipping himself, to the best of his ability, with an adequate and efficient knowledge of the influences which he must resist; and that he must never yield to discouragement when others are slow to add their voices and their labors to his. "Pray as though God must do it all; work as though you must do it all."

The plain truth is that now every lover of the Orthodox Faith must himself or herself be an example of unswerving loyalty to the Faith and of tireless missionary effort, because some of those whose sacred responsibility it is to be patterns for our imitation are setting examples which strongly convince many Orthodox people that Orthodoxy is a Protestant sect.

And now, with awareness of responsibility quickened, let us return to the Episcopalian "Branch Theory" of the Church, so that through a discussion of it we may see more clearly what the Orthodox Church teaches about the one Church.

The Branch Theory is based entirely on the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, but on a form of it which the Orthodox cannot accept because it contradicts the Ninth Article of the Creed.

According to this form of doctrine, the individual at ordination

idea, held by too many people, that we need not have any concern for the safety and prosperity of the Church. Christ, they say, protects the Church; we don't have to do very much — if anything — about it, because the Church is primarily His business and not ours. Against this attitude, the whole trend of Scriptural teaching is that man has responsibility, and must accept responsibility, and must work for the Kingdom of God. My father-in-law, a Presbyterian minister, used to tell me in his lifetime: "Pray as though God must do it all, and work as though you must do it all." Our Lord did indeed promise that the gates of Hell should never prevail against His Church: but man, bearing the image of his Creator, can choose for God or against Him, can work for God or refuse to work, and therefore can at least come near to doing what the gates of Hell can never do.

Consider what happened to the people of Israel, God's own chosen. Read Saint Paul's reflections on that history in his Epistle to the Romans. He shows how God's selection of chosen vessels successively narrowed down because of the disloyalty of His chosen people.

The choice of Abraham excluded the Gentiles. Next, the rejection of Ishmael and Esau excluded some of Abraham's own descendants. In the period of the Prophets it appears that even the majority of Israel was rejected, leaving only a small remnant to carry on the succession.

Our Lord Himself spoke (Luke 14:28, 29) of the coming of others to take the places reserved for the children of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets — coming from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, to sit down in the Kingdom of God. Always there will be somebody to inherit from the promises of God — but sometimes not many, because the majority may fall away. And those who fall away not only destroy their own hope, but also take upon themselves the blame for the loss of those whom they might have helped, taught, and inspired.

Some of us who have worked long years in the ministry have



The First Ecumenical Council

*An Account of the Great and Holy Council Assembled in the Year 325 at Nicaea During the Reign of the Emperor Saint Constantine the Great, Compiled by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery from the Books of Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, Theodoret, and Socrates**

After the overthrow of the wicked and impious tyrants Maxentius, Maximinus, and Licinius, the surge which those destroyers, like hurricanes, had roused was hushed to sleep; the whirlwinds were checked, and the Church henceforward began to enjoy a settled calm. This was established for her by Constantine, a prince deserving of all praise, whose calling, like that of the divine Apostle, was not of men, nor by man, but from Heaven. He enacted laws prohibiting sacrifices to idols, and commanding churches to be erected. He appointed Christians to be governors of the provinces, ordering honour to be shown to the priests, and threatening with death those who dared to insult them. By some the churches which had been destroyed were rebuilt; others erected new ones still more spacious and magnificent. Hence, for us, all was joy and gladness, while our enemies were overwhelmed with gloom and despair. The temples of the idols were closed; but frequent assemblies were held, and festivals celebrated, in the churches. But the devil, full of all envy and wickedness, the destroyer of mankind, unable to bear the sight of the

* This account of the First Ecumenical Council has been compiled from the *Church History* of Theodoret (Book 1, Chapters 1 and 6), included in Volume III of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, from the *Church History* of Sozomen (Book 1, Chapters 15, 16, 17 21, 23, and 25), and the *Church History* of Socrates (Book 1, Chapter 9), included in Volume II of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Minor changes have been made to allow these extremely important fifth century accounts to be combined into a continuous narrative.



Saint Constantine the Great

the beginning there was a visible Church which has had an uninterrupted continuation doctrinally and organizationally all through the centuries to our own time. From the beginning to this very day the history of this continuation is the history of our Orthodox Catholic Church. By Her own claim, our Orthodox Church is the one Church, the Church to which the Creed refers.

Our Orthodox people are often strongly reluctant to declare this fact. They usually find themselves unable to face their non-Orthodox fellow-Americans and tell them that only the Orthodox Church is true, and that all other organizations claiming to be churches are false churches. Sometimes our people are too polite, sometimes they are afraid, but most of the time their own weakness in the Faith makes them doubt that these terrifyingly numerous, large, and powerful groups could be false.

The Episcopalian Branch Theory

Protestant Episcopalians who call themselves Anglicans are as Protestant as any other Protestants by any test which may be applied, but they claim to be Catholic. In the face of the existence of Orthodox and Romans, they have not dared to claim that Protestant Episcopalians or Anglicans are alone the one true Church referred to in the Creed. Instead, they have worked out some theological novelties to construct the so-called “Branch Theory” of the Church. According to this “Branch Theory,” the Catholic Church has three branches: the Orthodox, the Roman, and the Episcopalian.

Consideration of this theory can teach the Orthodox much, not only about our Orthodox Religion, but also about the character of the perils which confront the Church — perils which it is their inescapable duty to face and overcome in their own communities, but which they cannot overcome except by learning the truth about the teachings of our own Orthodox Religion and then holding on to that truth steadfastly and unwaveringly.

Permit me to make a brief digression here to comment on the

religions as quaintly different and interesting, but not as clearly and positively wrong.

By our time, the earlier enthusiastic particularism of the Protestant sects has disappeared. They are mostly indistinguishable from one another, because freedom to believe as one pleases means freedom to believe in not very much. They all tend to believe as little as possible, and to subtract continually even from that little. So, inevitably the doctrine that each person can be his own supreme authority in religion is working itself out into sheer atheism for an increasing number of people. If it doesn't matter what church you belong to, how can it matter if you don't belong to any church at all? If it doesn't matter which or how many churches you reject, how can it matter if you reject them all? If it doesn't matter what you believe about Christ, how can it matter if you don't believe any thing at all about Him, or even if you deny that He ever existed, as many have done? Of course, in their progress toward atheism people move without haste — they may begin with broad-minded questioning of the Virgin Birth of our Lord, and not arrive at denial of the Resurrection until quite a while later.

To put the case plainly, the reasoning which leads to the doctrine that the Church is invisible must also lead finally to denial of the Church invisible as well as of the Church visible, for all minds that do not stop thinking. And in due time comes the denial, first of Providence, and at last of God's own existence.

The Orthodox Church is the Church of the Creed

Let us turn now to those who take the Creed in its plain and surely intended meaning, and confess that there is but one Church, and that that Church is visible to present observation, has been visible through all the centuries of Christian history, and will continue to be visible as long as this world endures.

We can begin with the obvious fact that, as history shows, from

Dismissal Hymn of SS. Constantine and Helen.

Plagal of Fourth Tone

Having seen the image of Thy Cross in Heaven, and like Paul, having received the call not from men, Thine apostle among kings entrusted the commonwealth to Thy hand, O Lord. Keep us always in peace, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, O only Friend of man.

Kontakion of SS. Constantine and Helen. Third Tone

On this day the Virgin

On this day Saint Constantine * and blessed Helen, his mother, * have revealed the Cross, the Wood * worthy of all veneration. * For the Jews, it is dishonour; * but faithful rulers * have it as a weapon vanquishing their opponents. * For our sakes hath it been shown forth * as a great ensign, * dread and most awesome in war.

Megalynarion of SS. Constantine and Helen

Constantine and Helen of noble fame * are acclaimed in anthems * as the glory of pious kings; * and as God's anointed * and peers of the apostles, * they shine forth with the grace of Christ God's exalted Cross.

Church sailing on with favourable winds, stirred up plans of evil counsel, eager to sink the vessel steered by the Creator and Lord of the Universe. When he began to perceive that the error of the Greeks had been made manifest, that the various tricks of the demons had been detected, and that the greater number of men worshipped the Creator, instead of adoring, as heretofore, the creature, he did not dare to declare open war against our God and Saviour; but having found some who, though dignified with the name of Christians, were yet slaves to ambition and vainglory, he made them fit instruments for the execution of his designs, and by their means drew others back into their old error, not indeed by the former method of setting up the worship of the creature, but by bringing it about that the Creator and Maker of all should be reduced to a level with the creature. We shall now proceed to examine where and by what means he sowed these tares.

Alexandria is an immense and populous city, charged with the leadership not only of Egypt, but also of the adjacent countries, the Thebaid and Libya. After Bishop Peter, the victorious champion of the Faith, had, during the sway of the aforesaid impious tyrants, obtained the crown of martyrdom, the Church in Alexandria was ruled for a short time by Achillas. He was succeeded by Alexander, who proved himself a noble defender of the doctrines of the Gospel. At that time, Arius, who had been enrolled in the list of the presbytery, and entrusted with the exposition of the Holy Scriptures, fell a prey to the assaults of jealousy, when he saw that the helm of the high priesthood was committed to Alexander. Stung by this passion, he sought opportunities for dispute and contention; and, although he perceived that Alexander's irreproachable conduct forbade his bringing any charges against him, envy would not allow him to rest. In him the enemy of the truth found an instrument whereby to stir and agitate the angry waters of the Church, and persuaded him to oppose the apostolical doctrine of Alexander. While the Patriarch, in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, taught that the Son is of equal dignity with the Father, and of the same essence with God Who begat

first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1:19-20).

The doctrine of universal competence to interpret Scripture means that theoretically there could be as many different Churches as there are people. But, in practice, the great majority of Protestants are contented merely with the recognition of their right to private interpretation, and do not take the trouble to exercise the right in any systematic fashion. Rather, they form organizations under the leadership, past or present, of the more active minds among them who actually have engaged in interpretation to work out statements of belief for which they have sought to win adherents.

Originally, the older Protestant denominations had separate and distinctive interpretations of Gospel and Creed to serve as some justification for their separate existences, and they showed great enthusiasm and vigor in maintaining their special beliefs. But because all of the denominations were based on the doctrine that each individual can construct his own beliefs according to his own ideas, it was impossible for any single denomination to claim forthrightly that it alone was the one true Church. For this reason Protestant theologians took the line that the one true Church includes everyone who belongs to Christ, regardless of membership in a particular organization, and that Christ alone can truly tell who they are. The ONE Church, they said, is invisible.

At the very heart of Protestantism, therefore, is planted in germ the popular modern idea that anyone can believe as he pleases, and on his own sole authority. Because no one knows who or what is right, the Church, composed of those who are right, must be invisible. And if the Church is invisible, with its members scattered among all denominations, and known only to Christ, who could oppose the idea that a believer's chances are likely to be as good in one denomination as in another? Indeed, those who believe that one denomination is as good as another often believe also that the chances of Mohammedans and Buddhists are likewise good enough. And Sunday School Lessons have appeared which present heathen

Practical Application of the Creed to Contemporary Conditions

Considering the present position of Orthodoxy everywhere, and especially in our own communities, we see that the most immediately applicable of all the Articles of the Creed is the Ninth: "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." In this Article the important word is the word ONE. The teaching is that there is ONE Church, as there is ONE Christ: there are not many Christs and many Churches. There are hundreds of non-Orthodox religious groups which describe themselves as Christian churches, but according to the Creed there is, and can be, only ONE true and real Church. The Church is the Body of Christ: how many Bodies are we to suppose that Christ had? The question which therefore demands an answer is, "Where is that one Church which alone is the one true Church?"

Historically, two different answers to this question have been given: one declares that the Church is indeed one, but invisible; the other declares that the Church is both one and visible.

The teaching that the Church is invisible is the foundation of Protestantism. Most Protestants accept the historic Creeds, and therefore cannot escape professing belief in one Church. But the essence of Protestantism is the claim that every person without exception has the right to explain the Scriptures in his own way as best he can. Saint Peter's Second Epistle (3:15, 16) warns against such ideas. He says: "The forbearance of our Lord means salvation. As indeed our beloved brother Paul has written to you, out of the wisdom vouchsafed to him, speaking of this as he has done in all his letters, in which are some things hard to be understood, which ignorant and unsteady souls twist (as they do the rest of the Scriptures) to their own destruction"; and also, "We have also a more steadfast word of prophecy, to which ye do well to take heed . . . knowing this

Him, Arius, in direct opposition to the truth, affirmed that the Son of God is merely a creature or created being, adding the famous saying, "There once was a time when He was not"; with other similar impious opinions. Arius taught these false doctrines perseveringly, not only in the church, but also in general meetings and assemblies; and he even went from house to house, endeavoring to make men the slaves of his error. Bishop Alexander, who was strongly attached to the doctrines of the Apostles, at first tried by exhortations and counsels to convince him of his error; but when he saw him playing the madman and making public declaration of his impiety, he deposed him from the order of the presbytery, for he heard the law of God loudly declaring, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

Such being the state of affairs at Alexandria, the partisans of Arius, deeming it prudent to seek the favour of the bishops of other cities, sent legations to them; they sent a written statement of their doctrines to them, requesting them that, if they considered such sentiments to be of God, they would signify to Bishop Alexander that he ought not to hinder them; but that if they disapproved of the doctrines, they should teach them what opinions were necessary to be held. This precaution was of no little advantage to them; for their tenets became thus universally disseminated, and the questions they had started became matters of debate among all the bishops. Some wrote to Alexander, entreating him not to receive the partisans of Arius into communion unless they repudiated their opinions, while others wrote to urge a contrary line of conduct. When Alexander perceived that many who were revered by the appearance of good conduct, and weighty by the persuasiveness of eloquence, held with the party of Arius, and particularly Eusebius, bishop of the Church of Nicomedia, a man of considerable learning and held in high repute at the palace, he wrote to the bishops of every Church desiring them not to hold communion with them. This measure kindled the zeal of each party the more, and as might have been expected, the contest was increasingly agitated.

After there had been many councils held in Egypt, and the contest had still continued to increase in violence, the report of the dissension reached the palace, and the Emperor Constantine was thereby greatly troubled; for just at this period, when religion was beginning to be more generally propagated, many were deterred by the difference in doctrines from embracing Christianity.

Constantine was also deeply grieved at the diversity of opinions which prevailed concerning the celebration of Pascha; for some of the cities in the East differed on this point, although they did not withhold from communion with one another; they kept the festival more according to the manner of the Jews, and as was natural by this divergence, detracted from the splendour of the festal celebration. The emperor zealously endeavoured to remove both these causes of dissension from the Church; and thinking to be able to remove the evil before it advanced to greater proportions, he sent one who was honoured for his faith, his virtuous life, and most approved in those former times for his confessions about this doctrine, to reconcile those who were divided on account of doctrine in Egypt, and those who in the East differed about the Paschal feast. This man was Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba, who had been a confessor of the Faith during the persecution of Diocletian.

When it was found that the event did not answer the expectations of the emperor, but that on the contrary, the contention was too great for reconciliation, so that he who had been sent to make peace returned without having accomplished his mission, Constantine convened a council at Nicaea, in Bithynia, and wrote to the most eminent men of the Churches in every country, directing them to be there on an appointed day. Of those who occupied the apostolic sees, the following participated in this conference: Macarius of Jerusalem, Eustathius, who already presided over the Church of Antioch on the Orontes; and Alexander of Alexandria near Lake Mareotis. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, was unable to attend on account of extreme old age; but his place was supplied by Vitus and Vincent, presbyters of his Church. Many other excellent and

as far as high school and habitually mix up Shakesperean and Biblical quotations.

People who say they have “no Creed but Christ,” and decry dogmas, are actually answering Christ’s question by saying that it doesn’t matter what anybody believes about Christ, or perhaps that no one should have answered Christ’s question, or even that it may have been wrong for Christ to ask the question in the first place. It may be that some people think that by taking this attitude they are defending the right of everybody to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They will not submit to a Creed — they have their own ideas, they can make up their own minds, and it isn’t necessary for everybody to have the same beliefs anyway. All this amounts to saying that it doesn’t matter what anybody believes about anything.

But consider the disaster for nations, the sufferings for the citizens of those nations, which can and do come from the belief that it doesn’t matter what any one believes. When there is no standard of belief, there are no standards for anything else either. In conduct, this means that everybody should be free to do as he pleases — but then we would have, not freedom, but license. Nobody then would be free any more, because every other human being in the world would be free to interfere with him; and life would cease to have meaning or value of any kind. Politically, the outcome of this erroneous view of freedom is Communist dictatorship or Nazi persecution. If there is no standard of belief, there can be no moral foundation for justice, and justice becomes only the right of the stronger. If there is no standard of belief, then the Christian Faith is merely something that people make up as they go along; and justice also is merely something that people make up as they go along.

and so intense as does the time of Christian beginnings. Life had become extraordinarily difficult, and people turned to religion in their troubles. In our day, life again has become extraordinarily difficult, and extraordinarily perilous too, but people turn to reliance upon human ingenuity and resourcefulness for relief. That ancient world stimulated and compelled religious study and interest: the development of an official Creed to define and state the whole of Christian teaching was inevitable, even apart from the pressure of missionary needs. In our day, altogether different circumstances hardly support any interest in such activity, indeed are hostile to any appreciation of religion at all. From our vantage point in history, “the fullness of time” must be understood to include the exact time suited for the composition of an official Christian Creed. For it is hard to see how the Christian Faith in later centuries could have survived alternating bitter discussion and killing indifference if there had been no Creed, and quite certainly in our own time the Creed is absolutely indispensable to the continuing existence and transmission of our Orthodox Catholic heritage.

These remarks have already begun the consideration of a question which often is asked, “Why have any Creed at all?”

Some of us have seen (as I have) on Protestant church signboards the slogan, “No Creed but Christ.” However, consider the fact that our Lord Himself (Matt. 22:42) put the question, “What think ye of Christ?” Any answer to this question is a credal statement. If some self-appointed experts should decide that there must be no creeds or dogmas, they contradict their own rule by formulating a dogma themselves: “There must be no creeds or dogmas.”

However, the self-appointed superior people to whom we refer are not experts. The less they know, the more they prattle on in their cheerful ignorance. Although all except the most hopelessly dim-witted understand the wisdom of the saying that a man who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for a client, yet almost everybody these days regards himself as an expert in religion, even those who never went

good men from different nations were congregated together, of whom some were celebrated for their learning, their eloquence, and their knowledge of the sacred books, and other discipline; some for the virtuous tenor of their life, and others for the combination of all these qualifications. About three hundred and twenty bishops were present, accompanied by a multitude of presbyters and deacons. There were, likewise, men present who were skilled in dialectics, and ready to assist in the discussions.

At this period many individuals were richly endowed with apostolical gifts; and many, like the holy Apostle, bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. James, Bishop of Nisibis in Syria, raised the dead and restored them to life, and performed many other wonders. Paul, Bishop of Neocaesarea, a fortress situated on the banks of the Euphrates, had suffered from the frantic rage of Licinius. He had been deprived of the use of both hands by the application of a red-hot iron, by which the nerves which give motion to the muscles had been contracted and rendered dead. Some had had the right eye dug out, others had lost the right arm. Among these was Paphnutius of Egypt. We know also of the participation of many other holy Fathers in the Council, such as the holy Confessors and Wonderworkers Nicholas and Spyridon. In short, the Council looked like an assembled army of Martyrs. Yet this holy and celebrated gathering was not entirely free from the element of opposition; for there were some, though so few as easily to be reckoned, of fair surface, like dangerous shallows, who really, though not openly, supported the blasphemy of Arius. These were powerfully opposed by Athanasius, then deacon of the Alexandrian Church, who was highly esteemed by Alexander his bishop.

When all were assembled, the emperor ordered a great hall to be prepared for their accommodation in the palace, in which a sufficient number of benches and seats were placed; and having thus arranged that they should be treated with becoming dignity, he desired the bishops to enter in, and discuss the subjects proposed. The emperor, with a few attendants, was the last to enter the room;

remarkable for his lofty stature, and worthy of admiration for personal comeliness, and for the still more marvellous modesty which dwelt on his countenance. A low stool was placed for him in the middle of the assembly, upon which, however, he did not seat himself until he had asked the permission of the bishops. Then all the sacred assembly sat down around him. Then forthwith rose first the great Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch, who crowned the emperor's head with the flowers of panegyric, and commended the diligent attention he had manifested in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

The excellent emperor next exhorted the bishops to unanimity and concord; he recalled to their remembrance the cruelty of the late tyrants, and reminded them of the honourable peace which God had, in his reign and by his means, accorded them. He pointed out how dreadful it was, yea, very dreadful, that at the very time when their enemies were destroyed, and when no one dared to oppose them, they should fall upon one another, and make their amused adversaries laugh, especially as they were debating about holy things, concerning which they had the written teaching of the Holy Spirit. "For the Gospels," continued he, "the apostolical writings, and the oracles of the ancient Prophets, clearly teach us what we ought to believe concerning the Divine Nature. Let, then, all contentious disputation be discarded; and let us seek in the divinely-inspired word the solution of the questions at issue." These and similar exhortations he, like an affectionate son, addressed to the bishops as to fathers, labouring to bring about their unanimity in the apostolical doctrines.

The bishops held long consultations, and after summoning Arius before them, they made an accurate test of his propositions. Most members of the council established concord among themselves, and embraced sound doctrine. There were, however, a few, of whom mention has been already made, who opposed these doctrines, and sided with Arius; and amongst them were Menophantus, Bishop of Ephesus, Patrophilus, Bishop of Scythopolis, Theognis, Bishop of Nicaea, and Narcissus, Bishop of Neronias; also Theonas,

message to those who were not Jews, explanations had to be articulated to suit a religious background of a very different character.

The world at the time of Christian beginnings was the scene of intense religious interest and activity. The numerous pagan religions of the day were pretty much all of one type, but they were in a state of keen competition with each other. The leading ones had elaborate and impressive rituals, and sometimes also had elaborate theologies that were morally and religiously acceptable to great numbers of good and intelligent people. These pagan religions were the product of active development and pious concern for a remote antiquity. In contrast, the Christian message had many unexpected facets even for Jews, and much time would pass before many of its more profound implications found their proper articulation. Accordingly, in spite of its new and deeper insights, the Christian message, in its earliest and barest form, could be explained to the Jewish tradition, of which it was a continuation, far more easily than to the fundamentally alien type of religious tradition which the Gentiles followed. Nevertheless, missionary activity among the Gentiles began early, and was immensely successful, especially among those Gentiles who had accepted already the Old Testament religion without actually accepting initiation into the Jewish community. Increasing contact with pagan religion compelled the Church to study intensely the treasures of Scripture and Tradition, and to meditate on their implications. As Saint Paul's Epistles show, some of the first impulse to such studies came from the need for self-defense. Pagan ideas and attitudes sometimes crept into Christian communities from the surrounding population; or they came to the surface again after conversion to Christ, because it is always hard to abandon completely the ideas and attitudes which many years have rooted deep.

The Apostle says (Gal. 4:4), "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son." From our position in history we can see that the "fullness of time" pertained not only to the Hebrew people, but also to the whole world of the Gentiles as well. No prior period in the annals of mankind shows a concern for religion so deep

time in America. For example, none of these Catechisms explains the Orthodox doctrine about the Orthodox Church in such a way as to protect the Orthodox Faithful from the influence of the overwhelmingly large, wealthy, and aggressive groups of non-Orthodox people among which we live in America. In these circumstances, the Creed has for us in America a supreme and indispensable value as itself a bulwark for the protection of the Pure and Blameless Orthodox Faith, and as a source of knowledge and power for the spread and transmission of our Religion.

In two lectures on the Creed it is impossible to cover the ground thoroughly. The subject subdivides into many specialized areas, each of which has employed and will continue to employ the energies of some of the ablest scholars in every generation.

Consider the fact that not merely every Article of the Creed, but even every phrase, and many of its words taken singly, express the climax, the end-point, of a long history of study and discussion by many able and pious minds, sometimes for generations. Consider the further fact that not one of these conclusions stands alone, but is wrought into the completed Creed in such fashion that everything in it is in perfect harmony with everything else in it, and nothing in it contradicts anything else in it. By the power of the Holy Spirit the Creed stands as the greatest achievement ever won by human thought.

Behind the Creed, we repeat, there is a rich and complex history of divinely inspired activity, a history we can rehearse here in only its broadest outlines.

I

Why Have a Creed?

From the very beginning of Christian missionary experience, the narratives supplied at first by tradition and later by written records had to be explained. Their details were first brought into connection with the Old Testament history and prophecy, because the first preaching was to the Jews. But in presenting the Christian

Bishop of Marmarica, and Secundus, Bishop of Ptolemais in Egypt. They drew up a formulary of their faith, and presented it to the Council. As soon as it was read it was torn to pieces, and was declared to be spurious and false. So great was the uproar raised against them, and so many were the reproaches cast on them for having betrayed religion, that they all, with the exception of Secundus and Theonas, stood up and took the lead in publicly renouncing Arius. This impious man having thus been expelled from the Church, the Confession of Faith which is received to this day was drawn up and accepted by unanimous consent.

The Holy Fathers affirmed the Son to be consubstantial with the Father; and that those are to be excommunicated and considered aliens to the Catholic Church, who assert that there was a time in which the Son existed not, and that before He was begotten He was not, and that He was made from what had no existence, and that He is of another nature or essence from the Father, and that He is subject to change or mutation. The Council excommunicated Arius and his adherents, and prohibited his entering Alexandria. The words in which his opinions were couched were likewise condemned, as also a book he had written on the subject.

With one accord, the Council wrote the following Epistle to the Church of the Alexandrians and the faithful of Egypt:

The Letter of the Council, relative to its Decisions: and the Condemnation of Arius and those who agreed with him.

To the holy, by the grace of God, and great Church of the Alexandrians, and to our beloved brethren throughout Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, the bishops assembled at Nicaea, constituting the great and holy Council, send greeting in the Lord.

Since, by the grace of God, a great and holy Council has been convened at Nicaea, our most pious sovereign Constantine having summoned us out of various cities and provinces for the purpose, it appeared to us indispensably necessary that

a letter should be written to you on the part of the sacred Council; in order that ye may know what subjects were brought under consideration and examined, and what was eventually determined on and decreed.

In the first place, then, the impiety and guilt of Arius and his adherents were examined into, in the presence of our most religious Emperor Constantine; and it was unanimously decided that his impious opinion should be anathematized, with all the blasphemous expressions he has uttered, in affirming that “the Son of God sprang from nothing,” and that “there was a time when He was not”; saying moreover that “the Son of God, because possessed of free will, was capable either of vice or virtue”; and calling Him a creature and a work. All these sentiments the holy Council has anathematized, having scarcely patience to endure the hearing of such an impious opinion, or, rather, madness, and such blasphemous words. But the conclusion of our proceedings against him you must either have been informed of already or will soon learn; for we would not seem to trample on a man who has received the chastisement which his crime deserved. Yet so contagious has his pestilential error proved, as to drag into perdition Theonas, Bishop of Marmarica, and Secundus of Ptolemaïs; for they have suffered the same condemnation as himself. But when the grace of God delivered us from those execrable dogmas, with all their impiety and blasphemy, and from those persons, who had dared to cause discord and division among a people previously at peace, there still remained the insolence of Melitius and those who had been ordained by him to be dealt with.

Then after dealing with the Melitian schism in Egypt at some length, the holy Council's Epistle concludes:

We have also good news to communicate to you relative to unity of judgment on the subject of the most holy feast of Pascha: for this point also has been happily settled through your prayers; so that all the brethren in the East who have



The Creed

By Rt. Rev. Michael G. H. Gelsinger, Ph.D.

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Introduction

When we of the Orthodox Catholic Religion speak of the Creed, we mean that statement of belief which we recite at the Liturgy just before the beginning of the Anaphora (the heart of the Liturgy).

The authorization of this Creed is ascribed to two Ecumenical Councils: the First Council, which met at Nicaea in 325; and the Second Council, which met at Constantinople in 381. The part ascribed to the Second Council consists of the teaching about the Holy Spirit: His Personality, Eternity, Divinity, Operations, and Procession. Because of the Creed's ascription to two Councils, it is sometimes called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; but it is also known as the Constantinopolitan Creed, and best known, as well as most commonly referred to, as the Nicene Creed.

The Creed is one of the principal subjects treated in the books of instruction called Catechisms. All Catechisms are composed to suit the needs of people of a particular time. Accordingly they do not always deal with some matters that are indispensable for us in our

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The Seven Ecumenical Councils

heretofore kept this festival when the Jews did, will henceforth conform to the Romans and to us, and to all who from the earliest time have observed our period of celebrating Pascha. Rejoicing therefore in these conclusions and in the general unanimity and peace, as well as in the cutting off of all heresy, receive with the greater honour and more abundant love our fellow-minister, your Bishop Alexander, who has greatly delighted us by his presence, and even at his advanced age has undergone extraordinary exertions in order that peace might be re-established among you. Pray on behalf of us all, that the things decided as just may be inviolably maintained through Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit; to Whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Nor was it the Council alone that took the trouble to write letters to the Churches announcing the restoration of peace, but the Emperor Constantine himself also wrote personally to the Church of the Alexandrians, assuring them that the Exposition of the Faith was neither made rashly nor at random, but that it was dictated with much thought, and after strict investigation: and not that some things were spoken of, while others were suppressed in silence; but that whatever could be fittingly advanced in support of any opinion was fully stated. That nothing indeed was precipitately determined, but all was previously discussed with minute accuracy; so that every point which seemed to furnish a pretext for ambiguity of meaning, or difference of opinion, was thoroughly sifted, and its difficulties removed. In short, he terms the thought of all those who were assembled there the thought of God, and does not doubt that the unanimity of so many eminent bishops was effected by the Holy Spirit.

Zealous of reforming the life of those who were engaged about the Churches, the Council enacted laws which were called canons. While they were deliberating about this, some thought that a law ought to be passed enacting that bishops and presbyters, deacons and sub-deacons should have no dealings with the wife they had espoused before their ordinations; but Paphnutius, the confessor,

stood up and testified against this proposition; he said that marriage was honourable and chaste, and that cohabitation with their own wives was chastity, and advised the Synod not to frame such a law, for it would be difficult to bear, and might serve as an occasion of incontinence to them and their wives; and he reminded them, that according to the ancient tradition of the Church, those who were unmarried when they received orders, were required to remain so, but that those who were married, were not to put away their wives. Such was the advice of Paphnutius, although he was himself unmarried and a monk, and in accordance with it, the Council concurred in his proposal, enacted no law about it, but left the matter to the decision of individual judgment, and not to compulsion. The Council, however, enacted other laws regulating the government of the Church; and these laws may easily be found in the various books of ecclesiastical canons.

At the very time that these decrees were passed by the Council, the twentieth anniversary of the reign of Constantine was celebrated; for it was a Roman custom to have a feast on the tenth year of every reign. The emperor, therefore, thought it to be opportune, and invited the Council to the festival, and presented suitable gifts to them; and when they prepared to return home, he called them all together, and exhorted them to be of one mind about the Faith and at peace among themselves, so that no dissensions might henceforth creep in among them. After many other similar exhortations, he concluded by commanding them to be diligent in prayer, and always to supplicate God for himself, his children, and the empire, and after he had thus addressed those who had come to Nicaea, he bade them farewell. He wrote to the Churches in every city, in order that he might make plain to those who had not been present, what had been rectified by the Council; urging them to lay aside all dissent, and to be harmonious in the Faith issued by the Council; for this could be nothing else than the judgment of God, since it was established by the Holy Spirit from the concurrence of so many and such illustrious high priests, and approved after accurate inquiry and test of all

the points in question.

Celebrating the memory of the three-hundred-and-eighteen God-bearing Fathers, we give thanks to God for their great witness to the Orthodox Faith and Piety, beseeching their intercessions that we be confirmed in the way of truth, ever rightly glorifying the Consubstantial Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

*Dismissal Hymn of the Holy Fathers
Plagal of Fourth Tone*

Most glorified art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our Fathers as luminous stars upon the earth, and through them didst guide us all to the true Faith. O Most Merciful One, glory be to Thee.

*Kontakion of the Holy Fathers
Plagal of Fourth Tone*

The preaching of the Apostles and the doctrines of the Fathers confirmed the one Faith in the Church. And wearing the garment of truth woven from the theology on high, she rightly divideth and glorifieth the great mystery of piety.

Megalyrnarion

Let us praise those Fathers of holy fame, * who, in the First Council, * cast down Arianism's creed * and confessed the Son, one in essence with the Father, * thus manifestly preaching the Apostolic Faith.